ability of steel of required high quality for manufacturing aircraft carrier warships;

(c) if so, the names of the countries approached by Government for procurement of such steel; and

(d) by when this project is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Government have approved construction of an Air Defence Ship (ADS) of approximately 37,500 Metric Tons at Cochin Shipyard Ltd., Kochi. The "concept design" defining the overall ship dimensions, evolution of hull form, general arrangement drawings, structure, stability, weight and space analysis and Hydrodynamic Model Tests have been completed. Design of the ship's systems and generation of detailed design documents/drawings have started. The baseline design of propulsion system has been completed.

(b) to (d) Initially it was proposed to import steel. Due to the progress achieved in the field of indigenous development of the required quality steel, the same is now being procured indigenously. The construction of the ADS is likely to be completed by 2011.

Visit of US Under Secretary for Defence

2252. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Under Secretary for Defence Mr. Douglas Feith visited New Delhi in June first week this year;

(b) if so, whether Government expressed its displeasure regarding continued US occupation of Iraq during meetings with him and discussed various issues including missile defence and new strategic partnership between India and the US; and

(c) if so, the details of the issues discussed and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) A US delegation led by Under Secretary for Defence, Mr. Douglas Feith visited New Delhi on June 1-2,2004 for the scheduled 6th Meeting of US-India Defece Policy Group (DPG).

(b) and (c) The meeting reviewed ongoing defence relations and initiatives within the framework of evolving relations between India and the US. Views were also exchanged on the global and regional security situation, including the situation in Iraq. The US also provided a briefing on the US Ballistic Missile Defence Programme.

Fire at Amlanagar AFS in M.P.

2253. SHRI DATTAMEGHE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether huge quantity of ammunition was destroyed and some IAF personnel were injured in a major fire that broke out at an Amlanagar Air Force Station in Madhya Pradesh on the 10th July, 2004;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the loss suffered as a result of this fire;

(c) the causes of the breaking out of fire; and

(d) the remedial measures taken to check recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Considerable quantity of ammunition was destroyed in the major fire that broke out on 10th July, 2004 at the Indian Air Force Station, Amla in Madhya Pradesh. No IAF personnel were injured.

A Court of Inquiry is in progress to inquire into the reasons of fire and to assess the exact loss caused by the fire. Remedial measures as per the recommendations of the Court of Inquiry will be taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents.

Criteria for selection of defence personnel

2254. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the selection of number of personnel for Defence forces from different States is made according to the population of the respective State;

(b) if so, whether the ratio of the selection of Defence Personnel from the States that brought down population has gone down; and